SOC4K03-SELECTED TOPICS IN SOCIOLOGY II: SOCIOLOGY OF STRESS AND MENTAL HEALTH

Fall, 2016
Day and Time of Classes: Tuesday 2:30am-5:20pm
Class Location: KTH/B107

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COURSE DESCRIPTION
The sociology of stress and mental health can be considered a core element of sociology, as well as an interdisciplinary linkage to the study of mental health in psychiatry, epidemiology, and psychology. In this seminar we emphasize the unique perspective sociology offers in the larger interdisciplinary discussion of stress and mental health. We also give attention to the broad importance of studying stress and mental health in other areas of sociology, such as stratification, gender, work, family, race/ethnicity, and urban studies. The main objective of the course is to recognize the importance of the social origins of stress and the complex pathways through which it impacts individuals' well-being across social situations, roles, and environments.

To accommodate various backgrounds in the subject, this seminar first provides an introduction and overview of basic issues in the sociology of stress and mental health, including its fundamental assumptions, findings, theories, and critical debates. Throughout the remaining classes, we will consider a series of selected topics related to systems of inequality in exposure and vulnerability to stress and mental health consequences. Examples of such systems include social and economic class locations, ethnicity, sexuality, and gender. Related to these systems, but of importance in their own right, are the organization, community, and neighborhood contexts in which people live and their associated social networks. We will also consider the role of personal and social resources that help individuals negotiate their experiences of stress and mental health consequences, including coping behaviours, self-concept, and social support.

The emphasis will be on recent, innovative readings and research (post-millennium), but we will also review more influential work from the past that has shaped the unique perspective of sociology of stress and mental health. Each week, several students will lead the discussion of selected readings by presenting an overview of the assigned piece, and proposing questions to the class that encourage creative, critical discussion.

COURSE OBJECTIVES
By the end of the course, you will:
- Develop an understanding of the importance of sociology of mental health, including the substantive, disciplinary, and practical implications of the research area.
- Be able to effectively present, interpret, and critique research findings on mental health outcomes from a sociological perspective.
- Be familiar with the interpretation of mental health as a continuous or fluid experience, divorced from diagnosis, and influenced by social context.
- Understand how various groups of society experience stress, stressors, and psychological distress differentially.
- Be more familiar with published research in the sociology of mental health.

LEARNING OUTCOMES
This course addresses several University Undergraduate Degree Level Expectations (see, http://cll.mcmaster.ca/COU/pdf/Undergraduate%20Degree%20Level%20Expectations.pdf).
- Sociologists rely on a range of theories to test hypotheses and answer research questions about the sociology of stress and mental health. Gaining knowledge of these diverse approaches will expand the student's depth and breadth of knowledge.
- Different research questions about mental health require different types of research methods. Students will learn to evaluate the appropriateness of different approaches to answering research questions.

- This course will teach students the application of established theories, concepts, and research findings, as well as interpret and critically reflect upon conclusions using a sociology of mental health perspective.
- This course will further develop the student's communication and writing skills through various evaluative tools.

COURSE READINGS
Required Reading
Sociology 4K03 Custom Courseware Book (available at the bookstore)

Optional Reading
Mirowsky, John and Catherine E. Ross. 2003. *Social Causes of Psychological Distress*. 2nd Edition. Aldine De Gruyter (available at the bookstore)

These readings reflect the fundamental core of the course, and will serve as the foundation for our in-class discussions. Given time restrictions, we may not cover every aspect of the readings during class periods. However, you should be familiar with all materials referenced on the syllabus. Students are required to express related opinions, questions and insights about the readings in class. I strongly recommend purchasing the optional reading by Mirowsky and Ross. This book helps set the foundation for the materials discussed throughout this course.

METHOD OF EVALUATION
Weekly summaries and participation 20% (10% weekly summaries; 10% contribution to class discussion)
Seminar presentation 20%
Media response paper 15%
Mid-Term 15%
Research Paper 30%

Weekly Summaries and Participation (20%)
Every week student must come prepared with a brief summary of the readings (~1 page, single-spaced) including questions/topics to discuss. Bring two copies of the summary, one copy (which can be electronic) to refer to during class discussion and one to hand in at the beginning of class. You are not required to hand in a summary the week of your seminar presentation.

In-Class Mid-Term (15%)
The class exam will consist of multiple-choice questions. You are responsible for materials covered in student-led presentations, lectures, and assigned readings. The mid-term will be held during regular class hours in the normal classroom. The mid-term offers you an opportunity to see how well you are doing in the course to date.

Seminar Presentation (20%)
Half of the class will be led by several students. Students can present independently, or collaboratively on selected articles. It is up to the students' discretion. This will involve a presentation that briefly summarizes the major points of the readings for that week, and raises issues/debates for discussion during class. Student presenters will be responsible for guiding discussion in the following ways: 1) their presentation should incorporate specific empirical/theoretical questions for class debate; 2) they will present a relevant issues in the media or pop culture related to the topic of their presentation.

Media Response Paper (15%)
You will write a short analysis of a contemporary media topic that deals with some aspect of stress and mental health (i.e., current events, news articles, or relevant controversies discussed in other mediums, such as on-line forums and blogs). I will provide a list of suggested topics within the first few weeks of classes. You will apply course concepts and findings learned to-date in the class to your selected topic. Critical thinking of media and

course materials should be emphasized in your response paper. Your media response paper is **due** Nov. 17, and is worth 15% of your final grade. Please ensure that your paper is approximately <u>two to three pages</u>, excluding references and title page, Times New Roman 12pt font, double spaced with one-inch margins.

Research Paper (30%)

The purpose of the research paper is to provide students with the opportunity to review and apply the concepts and ideas learned throughout the course. You will choose someone you know as a case study, and apply course concepts and findings to help explain their emotional or psychological state, or alternatively, to help explain why they do *not* have problems given a high-risk life history. The anonymity of the person should be protected. Your current knowledge of the person and their life circumstances must be sufficient to write the paper (*note that you will not be interviewing this person, but instead, will reflect on their situation based on your personal knowledge of the individual's current and previous life circumstances*). You may discuss a range of topics related to the individuals' past and present work and family situations, neighbourhood context, social and demographic background, and personal or social coping mechanisms, such as support systems, or psychological resources. You may also discuss a variety of mental health outcomes, such as generalized distress, anxiety, depression, sleep problems, and emotional reactions, such as anger or guilt.

Throughout the paper, you will address the following three points:

1. *Give a short history of the problem, or circumstances that could have led to a mental health experience, including important circumstances that must be included to answer questions #2 and #3. Discuss the specific content of the problem, relating it to known criteria for chronic or episodic stress, psychological distress, and related mental health outcomes. Also briefly discuss, if appropriate, issues of duration of symptoms, timing in the life course, and severity. This question must be answered in 1 to 2 pages.*

2. *Comment on the specific risk for these problems suggested by findings on the social distribution of mental health from the course. Does your case fit these findings or not? If not, hypothesize why. Answer this part in 2 to 3 pages.*

3. *Discuss the role of social statuses, stress exposure, vulnerability, and coping resources in explaining the development of their problem and whether the problem has diminished or—if applicable—grown over time. It is important here that you focus only on what you argue are the "crucial" stressors or coping resource problems that explain why the problem occurred when it occurred, and how it was maintained over time. If you choose to analyze someone who has avoided mental health problems despite stress, present why you think the stressors they have experienced are important and how their coping resources helped avoid problems. Answer this question in 4 to 5 pages.*

Your research paper is due the final week of classes, and is worth 30% of your final grade. Please ensure that your paper is approximately <u>eight to ten pages</u>, excluding references and title page, Times New Roman 12pt font, double spaced with one-inch margins. You must hand in a paper copy. Electronic submissions will not be accepted.

LATE ASSIGNMENTS & MISSED TEST

Late assignments will be deducted 5% per day starting immediately after the designated due date and time has passed. Students who miss a test or assignment deadline due to *special circumstances* must contact me at least 48 hours prior by email and provide formal documentation as outlined below under Departmental/University Policies.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY:

Academic dishonesty consists of misrepresentation by deception or by other fraudulent means and can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: "Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty"), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university.

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various kinds of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, specifically Appendix 3, located at http://www.mcmaster.ca/policy/Students-AcademicStudies/AcademicIntegrity.pdf

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:
1. Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one's own or for which other credit has been obtained.
2. Improper collaboration in group work.
3. Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

In this course we will be using a web-based service (Turnitin.com) designed to reveal plagiarism. Students will be required to submit their work electronically and in hard copy so that it can be checked for academic dishonesty. Students who do not wish to submit their work to Turnitin.com must still submit a copy to the instructor. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to Turnitin.com; however, papers that are not submitted to Turnitin will be graded last and subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld (e.g., on-line search). To see the Turnitin.com Policy, please go to www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity.

GRADING
Please see the McMaster Grading System for the current grading scale:
http://registrar.mcmaster.ca/calendar/2012-13/pg145.html
E-mail etiquette and Avenue Policy: Email correspondence with the professor <u>must</u> contain your full name and student ID. All emails must be respectful in tone and content.

<u>COURSE SCHEDULE</u>

PART 1. INTRODUCTION: STRESS PROCESSES AND MENTAL HEALTH

NOTE: *Required readings are numbered below. *Indicates supplementary readings.*

Overview: The Sociological Study of Stress Processes and Outcomes
[WEEK 1] Sept. 6: *Introduction to Course Content*

[WEEK 2] Sept 13: *The Stress Process and Measuring Social Stress*
(1) Pearlin, Leonard I. 1999. "The Stress Process Revisited: Reflections on Concepts and Their
       Interrelationships." Pp. 395- 415 in *The Handbook of the Sociology of Mental Health*, edited by C. S.
       Aneshensel and J. C. Phelan. New York: Kluwer.
(2) Wheaton, Blair, Marisa Young, Shirin Montazer and Catherine Stuart. 2012. "Social Stress in the 21st
       Century." In C. Aneshensel, J. Phelan, A. Bierman (eds.), Handbook of the Sociology of Mental Health.
       2nd Edition (pp. 299-324). New York: Springer.
*Wheaton, Blair. 2001. "The Role of Sociology in the Study of Mental Health…and the Role of Mental Health
       in the Study of Sociology." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 42 (Sept.): 221-234.
*Mirowsky and Ross *Social Causes of Psychological Distress*, pp. 3-20; 159-170.

[WEEK 3] Sept. 20: *Conceptualizing and Measuring Distress*
(3) Horwitz, Allan V. 2007. "Distinguishing Distress from Disorder as Psychological Outcomes of Stressful
       Social Arrangements." *Health:* 11(3):273-289.
(4) Wheaton, Blair. 2007. "The Twain Meet: Distress, Disorder and the Continuing Conundrum of Categories
       (comment on Horwitz)." *Health* 11(3):303-319.
(5) Schnittker, Jason. 2012. "The Proximity of Common Unhappiness and Misery." *Society & Mental Health*
       2(3): 135-153.
*Mirowsky and Ross *Social Causes of Psychological Distress*, pp. 23-71.

PART 2. SOCIAL PATTERNS AND SELECTED STATUSES

[WEEK 4] Sept. 27: *Basic Social Patterns and Causes*
(6) Aneshensel, Carol. 2009. "Toward Explaining Mental Health Disparities." *Journal of Health and Social
       Behavior* 50(4): 377-94.
(7) McLeod, Jane D. 2015. "Why and How Inequality Matters." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* Online
       First. doi: 10.1177/0022146515581619.
(8) Mirowsky, J. 2013. "Analyzing Associations between Mental Health and Social Circumstances." in The
       Handbook of the Sociology of Mental Health, edited by C. S. Aneshensel and J. Phelan. New York:
       Kluwer Academic.
* Kessler, Ronald. C. 2013. "Overview of Descriptive Epidemiology of Mental Disorders." Pp. 169-82 in *The
       Handbook of the Sociology of Mental Health*, 2nd Edition, edited by C. S. Aneshensel, J. C. Phelan, and
       Alex Bierman. New York: Springer.

[WEEK 5] Oct. 4: *Age and the Life Course*
(9) George, Linda K. 2013. "Life Course Perspectives on Mental Health." Pp. 585-599 in *The Handbook of the
       Sociology of Mental Health*. 2nd edition, edited by C. S. Aneshensel, J. C. Phelan, and A. Bierman. New
       York: Springer.
(10) Pearlin, Leonard I. and Marilyn M. Skaff. 1996. "Stress and the Life Course: A Paradigmatic Alliance."
       The Gerontologist 36:239–247.
(11) Schieman, S., van Gundy, K., & Taylor, J. 2001. "Status, Role, and Resource Explanations for Age
       Differences in Psychological Distress." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 42: 80- 96.
*Benson, Janel E. 2014. "Reevaluating the 'Subjective Weathering' Hypothesis: Subjective Aging, Coping
       Resources, and the Stress Process." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 55(1): 73-90.
*Mirowsky and Ross *Social Causes of Psychological Distress*, pp. 112-129.

*George, Linda K. 2015. "Taking Time Seriously: A Call to Action in Mental Health Research." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 55(3): 251-264.

[WEEK 6] Oct. 11: *Reading Break No Class*

[WEEK 7] Oct. 18: *Gender, Work and Family*
(12) Rosenfield, Sarah. 1999. "Splitting the Difference: Gender, the Self, and Mental Health." in *The Handbook of the Sociology of Mental Health*, edited by C. S. Aneshensel and J. Phelan. New York: Kluwer Academic.
(13) Simon, Robin W. 1995. "Gender, Multiple Roles, Role Meaning, and Mental Health." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 36:182–194.
(14) Carr, Deborah. 2002. "The Psychological Consequences of Work-Family Trade-Offs for Three Cohorts of Men and Women." *Social Psychology Quarterly*. 65(2):103-124.
*Mirowsky and Ross *Social Causes of Psychological Distress*, pp. 84-111.
*Glavin, Paul, Scott Schieman, and Sarah Reid. 2011. "Boundary-Spanning Work Demands and their Consequences for Guilt and Psychological Distress." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 52(1): 43-57.
*Simon, Robin W. 2014. "Twenty Years of the Sociology of Mental Health: The Continued Significance of Gender and Marital Status for Emotional Well-Being" Pp. 21-51 in *The Handbook of Sociology of Mental Health: Selected Topics from Forty Years 1970s-2010s*, edited by R. J. Johnson, R.J. Turner, and B.G. Link. New York: Springer.

[WEEK 8] Oct. 25: *Race, Ethnicity & Immigration*
(15) Brown, T.N. et al. 2013. "Race, Ethnicity and Culture in the Sociology of Mental Health." in The Handbook of the Sociology of Mental Health 2nd edition, edited by C. S. Aneshensel, J. Phelan, and A. Bierman. New York: Springer. *(Available on Avenue)*
(16) Montazer, Shirin and Blair Wheaton. 2011. "The Impact of Generation and Country of Origin on the Mental Health of Immigrant Children: New Models for Understanding Adjustment across Generations." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 52: 23-42.
(17) Noh, Sam and William Avison. 1996. "Asian Immigrants and the Stress Process: A Study of Koreans in Canada." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 37(2): 192-206.
*Mossakowoski, K. 2003. "Coping with Perceived Discrimination: Does Ethnic Identity Protect Mental Health?" *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 44(3): 318-331.

[WEEK 9] Nov. 1: *Multiple Choice Test on Material to Date*

PART 3: SOCIAL RESOURCES, CONTEXTS, AND CAVEATS

[WEEK 10] Nov. 8: *Psychological Resources, Alienation, and Identity*
(18) Turner, R. Jay & Robyn Lewis Brown. 2010 "Social Support and Mental Health." Pp. 200-212 in *A Handbook for the Study of Mental Health, Second* Edition, edited by T. Scheid and T. Brown. New York: Cambridge University Press.
(19) Mirowsky, John & Catherine E. Ross. 1990. "Control or Defense?: Depression and the Sense of Control over Good and Bad Outcomes." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 31: 71-86.
(20) Thoits, Peggy, A. 1999. "Self, Identity, Stress, and Mental Health." Pp. 345-36 in *The Handbook of the Sociology of Mental Health*, edited by C. S. Aneshensel and J. C. Phelan. New York: Kluwer Academic.
*Mirowsky and Ross *Social Causes of Psychological Distress*, pp. 171-229.
**Mirowsky and Ross. 1990. "The Consolation-Prize Theory of Alienation." *American Journal of Sociology* 95(6): 1505-1535.

[WEEK 11] Nov. 15: *Neighbourhood Context*
(21)Aneshensel, Carol. S. 2009. "Neighborhood as a Social Context of the Stress Process." Pp. 35-52 in *Advances in the Conceptualization of the Stress Process: Essays in Honor of Leonard I. Pearlin*. Edited by William Avison, Carol Aneshensel, Scott Schieman, and Blair Wheaton. New York: Springer.

(22) Young, Marisa and Blair Wheaton. 2013. "The Impact of Neighborhood Social Composition on Work-Family Conflict and Distress." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 54(4): 481-97.

(23) Wheaton, Blair and Philippa Clarke. 2003. "Space Meets Time: Integrating Temporal and Contextual Influences on Mental Health in Early Adulthood." *American Sociological Review* 68:680–706.

*Mirowsky and Ross *Social Causes of Psychological Distress*, pp. 145-158

**Ross, Mirowsky, and Prebish. 2001. "Powerlessness and the Amplification of Threat: Neighborhood Disadvantage, Disorder, and Mistrust." *American Sociological Review* 66(4): 568-591.

Media Response Paper due today

[WEEK 12] Nov. 22: *Stigma, Discrimination, and the Stress Process*

(24) Link, B.G. and J.C. Phelan. 1999. "Labeling and Stigma." in The Handbook of the Sociology of Mental Health, edited by C. S. Aneshensel and J. Phelan. New York: Kluwer Academic.

(25) Pescosolido, Bernice. 2013. "The Public Stigma of Mental Illness: What Do We Think; What do we Know; What Can we Prove?" *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 54(1): 1-21.

(26) Yang, Lawrence et al. 2007. "Culture and Stigma: Adding Moral Experience to Stigma Theory." *Social Science & Medicine* 64: 1524-1535.

[WEEK 13] Nov. 29: *Sexuality and Mental Health*

(27) Meyer, Ilan H. 1995. "Minority Stress and Mental Health in Gay Men." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior.* 36(1): 38-56.

(28) Ueno, Koji. 2005. "Sexual Orientation and Psychological Distress in Adolescence: Examining Interpersonal Stressors and Social Support Processes." *Social Psychology Quarterly.* 68(3): 258-277.

(29) Green, Adam Isiaah. 2008. "Health and Sexual Status in an Urban Gay Enclave: An Application of the Stress Process Model", Journal of Health and Social Behavior. 49:436-451.

*Everett, Bethany. (2015). "Sexual Orientation Identity Change and Depressive Symptoms: A Longitudinal Analysis." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 56(1): 37-58.

[WEEK 14] Dec. 6: *Where Do We Go from Here? Critiques and Extensions*

(30) Wheaton, Blair. 2010. "The Stress Process as a Successful Paradigm." In *Advances in the Conceptualization of the Stress Process: Essays in Honor of Leonard I. Pearlin* (W. Avison et al., Eds). Pp 231-252. New York: Springer.

(31) McLeod, Jane D. 2012. "The Meanings of Stress: Expanding the Stress Process Model." *Society & Mental Health* 2(3): 172-186.

(32) Thoits, Peggy A. 2010. "Stress and Health: Major Findings and Policy Implications." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 51 (Special Issue):S41-S53.

*Pescosolido, Bernice A., Carol A. Boyer, and Kerl M. Lubell. 1999. "The Social Dynamics of Responding to Mental Health Problems." Pp. 441-460 in *The Handbook of the Sociology of Mental Health*. Edited by C. Aneshensel and J. Phelan. New York, Springer. *(Available on Avenue)*

Research Paper due today

Schedule subject to change based on unforeseen circumstances

DEPARTMENTAL/UNIVERSITY POLICIES:

Do NOT fax assignments. Please see your instructor for the most appropriate way to submit assignments.

The Sociology staff do NOT date-stamp assignments, nor do they monitor the submission or return of papers.

The McMaster Student Absence Form (http://www.mcmaster.ca/msaf/ is a self reporting tool for Undergraduate Students to report absences that last up to 3 days and provides the ability to request accommodation for any missed academic work. Please note, this tool cannot be used during any final examination period.

You may submit a maximum of 1 Academic Work Missed request per term. It is YOUR responsibility to follow up with your instructor immediately regarding the nature of the accommodation.

If you are absent more than 5 days, exceed 1 request per term, or are absent for a reason other than medical, you MUST visit your Associate Dean's Office (Faculty Office). You may be required to provide supporting documentation.

This form should be filled out when you are about to return to class after your absence.

Students should check the web, the white board and the Undergraduate Bulletin board outside the Sociology office (KTH-627) for notices pertaining to Sociology classes or departmental business (e.g. class scheduling information, location of mailboxes and offices, tutorial information, class cancellations, TA job postings, etc.).

Computer use in the classroom is intended to facilitate learning in that particular lecture or tutorial. At the discretion of the instructor, students using a computer for any other purpose may be required to turn the computer off for the remainder of the lecture or tutorial.

The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check his/her McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.

It is the policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences that all e-mail communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from the student's own McMaster University e-mail account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that communication is sent to the university from a McMaster account. If an instructor becomes aware that a communication has come from an alternate address, the instructor may not reply at his or her discretion.